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An update for members and partners of the new Marine Recreational Information Program

APRIL 2008

IN THIS UPDATE:

- **From the Chairman's Desk**
- **Workshop Aims to Improve Understanding of Angler Surveys**
- **Regional Listening Sessions Continue**
- **Work Group Updates**
- **Release of 2007 MRFSS Estimates**
- **Media Bites**
- **Upcoming Events**

FULL STORIES:

From the Chairman's Desk

We are making great progress on developing the new Marine Recreational Information Program with the help of our partners and constituents, and we get a lot of questions about when the new program will be implemented. Meeting today's demands for data through the MRFSS while simultaneously creating a new Marine Recreational Information Program that anticipates tomorrow's data needs is no small challenge. Transitioning from the current system to a new system will not happen over night. Rather implementation will be an evolution as we run the two survey programs side-by-side and continuously make improvements based on results from the work group studies and projects. Collectively these efforts are moving us toward a national system of regional surveys that provide increased spatial and temporal resolution and levels of accuracy and precision that we all can have confidence in. These changes being made are significant and will become more evident in the coming months and years.

The challenge is in explaining the significant progress being made absent any highly visible changes. As you'll read about below, the registry team is nearing release of a proposed rule that will offer guidance to the states and individuals on meeting the Magnuson Act's registry requirements. The individual work groups, under the direction of the Operations Team, are addressing the technical recommendations related to survey design and data collection. The results from these various pilot studies and research projects will lead us to survey improvements. Together these ongoing efforts are creating the foundation of the new Marine Recreational Information Program.

In the meantime, we're creating a framework report for the new program. This document will provide our vision and outline in greater detail our progress toward an improved data program. We plan on publicly releasing the report in mid-summer. We will be accepting feedback through the fall with the goal of submitting a report to Congress by the end of the year.

Dr. John Boreman

Chair, Executive Steering Committee

Workshop Aims to Improve Understanding of Angler Surveys

NOAA Fisheries will host its 5th annual Constituent Data Review workshop May 5-6 in Alexandria, Virginia. Understanding how angler data is gathered and analyzed is critical to making more

informed choices about today's fishery management decisions. Improving this understanding was a critical need identified in National Research Council's 2006 review of recreational survey methods. As a result, this two-day workshop has been redesigned to provide a more comprehensive look at how data is currently collected, analyzed and incorporated into stock assessments and management plans. Please contact Gordon Colvin (gordon.colvin@noaa.gov) or Forbes Darby (forbes.darby@noaa.gov) for more information.

Regional Listening Sessions Continue

MRIP team leads continued their regional visits last month with trips to St. Petersburg, Florida, Providence, Rhode Island, and Charleston, South Carolina. "The new Marine Recreational Information Program will not be a one-size fits all survey program," stated Preston Pate, chair of the Operations Team, during his introductory comments. "Rather it will be a system of regional surveys that are based on national guidelines, but designed to meet regional needs." Each of these regional meetings brought together data partners from NOAA Fisheries' regional offices and science centers, fishery management councils and interstate marine fisheries commissions, and state agencies. The purpose was to gather information about regional fisheries and the specific data and management needs. "We know every region has different challenges, so our new program will need the flexibility to focus on those regional issues," concluded Pate. The regional visits continue later this month with a meeting in La Jolla, California with our West Coast partners.

Work Group Updates

National Saltwater Angler Registry Update

The team's Proposed Rule is still awaiting clearance from the Office of Management and Budget. The rule will establish the requirements for individuals and for-hire vessels to register with NOAA Fisheries beginning in January 2009. The rule will also specify the process and criteria NOAA will use to designate state as exempted, thereby exempting their license-holders from the federal registration requirement. Once released, the proposed rule will be open for a 45-day public comment period. We will notify you as soon as the proposed rule is cleared, so stay tuned.

New Work Group Created

The Angler Registry Team has established an Angler Registry Database Work Group to develop the technical database requirements and processes for transferring state license data to the national registry. The work group includes strong representation from the states and is headed up by Dr. Erik Barth from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission.

Final 2007 Estimates Available

The final 2007 catch and effort estimates from the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey will be available online beginning Monday, April 21st. To query the 2007 estimates, please visit the NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology website (www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov) and click on the "Fisheries Statistics" tab and then select "Recreational Fisheries".

Media Bites – MRIP in the News

Angler Registry Team chair Gordon Colvin is cited in a *New York Newsday* article from April 18th about a New York State Assembly hearing on compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act angler registration requirement.

An April 15th editorial in the *Hartford Courant* provided a well-reasoned argument in favor of Connecticut adopting a saltwater fishing license.

The *Asbury Park Press* (NJ) provided a comprehensive overview of the MRIP initiative in an April 11th article. The article stemmed from information given at a seminar conducted by MRIP team members (Gordon Colvin, Forbes Darby, and Jason Didden) at the recent Saltwater Fishing Expo in Somerset, New Jersey.

On the Water magazine (MA) dedicated their "Regulation Watch" section in March's special season opening edition to the recreational data redesign and angler registry efforts.

Rip Cunningham penned an article for the March issue of *Center Console Angler* about the role of the Marine Recreational Information Program and the importance of getting more accurate data given the Magnuson-Stevens Act's new Annual Catch Limit requirements.

See an article about MRIP in the news? Please let us know by contacting Forbes Darby at forbes.darby@noaa.gov.

Coming Soon – A Fresh New MRIP Website

The newly redesigned website for the Marine Recreational Information Program is scheduled to go live by the end of the month. Stay tuned for an announcement marking the debut of the new website.

Upcoming Events

Members of the Executive Steering Committee, teams, and work groups are hitting the road each month to brief partners and constituents about the Marine Recreational Information Program initiative. Below are only a few of the meetings and events.

April Events

- Northeast Region Listening Session
- Pacific Coast Regional Listening Session
- New England Saltwater Sportfishing Show
- Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference
- NOAA Day at the Docks
- National Casting Call
- American Boating Congress

May Events

- Constituent Data Review Workshop
- Joint Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program workshop

Click <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/> for a complete schedule of upcoming briefings. If you're interested in inviting a representative of the initiative to provide a briefing to your organization, please contact Forbes Darby.

Newscast updates are e-mailed monthly to NOAA Fisheries, state natural resource agencies, marine fisheries commissions, fishery management councils and members of the sportfishing community with an interest in the initiative to improve saltwater recreational fishing information. For more information, contact Forbes Darby at forbes.darby@noaa.gov or by phone at (301) 713-9501.